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Catholics Reply to
"Open Letter"
on Spain

Signed by

175

Priests and Laymen

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Catholics Reply to Open Letter of 150 Protestant Signatories on Spain

Clarifying Spanish Civil War Issues

Francis Talbot, S.J.

Spain's Social-Work Program

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Catholics Reply to Open Letter of 150 Protestant Signatories on Spain

*A Reply to an "Open Letter" published in the New York Times for
October 4, 1937, and signed by 150 Protestant clergymen and
laymen attacking the Pastoral Letter of the Spanish
Bishops on the Civil War in Spain.*

THE outbreak on July 18, 1936, of the military conflict in Spain has precipitated a situation in which there is daily danger of a conflict between the major nations of the world. There has been precipitated likewise a clash of ideologies in the minds of every intelligent observer of world events. Hence it is essential for the preservation of world peace that the facts in the Spanish situation, the ideologies of the contending forces and the causes which lead up to the present deplorable condition should be truly and accurately understood by every American.

Even those who had been close students of Spanish affairs, especially since the establishment of the Republic in 1931, were shocked by the suddenness and by the violence of the outbreak of the Civil War. The Government then resident at Madrid was the established power in Spain. For that reason it had the assumption of authority, an authority which was being disputed by an insurgent element. It had moreover at its disposal diplomatic channels for communication with the governments of the world. In addition to this it had an officially established department of propaganda for the dissemination of reports favorable to itself. As a result the foreign governments and the foreign press were disposed to favor the Madrid Government and to condemn outright those who were immediately designated as rebels.

It was only in succeeding months, after battles had been fought and campaigns executed, that the true issues of the conflict precipitated on July 18 were clarified. During the latter part of the summer and autumn of 1936 it was pos-

sible to learn of the conditions that brought about an armed uprising, to be aware of the governmental, economic, social, and religious principles that animated the combatants. Before all the facts about Spain during the year 1936 were fully disclosed, the Madrid Government was able to enlist the sympathies of the people with democratic instincts in the democratic countries of the world.

In the United States the cause of the Madrid Government was popularized through the newspapers, through the support of liberal and radical elements, and through the direct help of Communistic organizations. The result was a bitter and vehement detestation of the Nationalists in Spain, a campaign of misrepresentation, errors, and deliberate lies. This conditions has been changed more and more since the early months of 1937. The facts about Spain and the issues involved in Spain have been more honestly and honorably publicized and hence they should be understood by those who uphold civic and religious freedom for all men.

Since these facts and issues covering both the Loyalist and Nationalist parties in the Spanish Civil War are known it is not only surprising but gravely alarming to find that there are 150 Protestant clergymen and laymen who were willing to sign the document published in the *New York Times* for October 4th, under the heading, *An Open Letter in Reply to Spanish Hierarchy's Recent Views of War*. The publication of that letter has not only misrepresented the facts and the issues of Spain but it has also tended to create a species of religious war in the United States.

Though the signatories of this present reply to the Open Letter are accepting the challenge contained in the letter signed by the 150 Protestant clergymen and laymen, the challenge in reality is to American Protestantism. Specifically, the challenge is this: Do American Protestants accept and endorse a governmental regime that has carried on a ruthless persecution of the Christian religion since February, 1936? Does American Protestantism endorse a regime that is composed predominantly of radical Socialists, Communists, Syndicalists, and Anarchists? Does American Protestantism champion a regime that has consistently violated in theory and in practise the fundamental principles of liberty and democracy guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States?

It is not necessary for any Protestant or any Catholic to give his complete approbation to the Nationalist cause in Spain. But it is absolutely and unquestionably necessary for every Protestant and Catholic in the United States to repudiate and to condemn the policies and the acts against religious and civic liberty perpetrated by the so-called Loyalist Government.

It seems to us well, then, to present a true statement in regard to the conflict in Spain and correction of the errors contained in the Open Letter of the 150 Protestant signatories.

TRULY A CIVIL WAR

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the conflict in Spain is civil, primarily, and religious, secondarily. The war that lamentably now rages is between those who attempted through governmental changes to force on the Spanish people a Sovietized or anarchized regime and those who resisted that attempt. The Catholic citizens of Spain, both clerical and lay, aligned themselves with General Franco as Spanish citizens and not as Catholics. The Spanish citizen as a citizen had an immediate and tragic decision to make on July 18, 1936, for or against a governmental administration that had persecuted the citizens civilly and also as Catholics. The decision was for or against a political group that had seized power and was professedly and energetically aspiring to the Sovietization of Spain, that was gradually, yet with purpose and foresight, building up a dictatorship, that would repress the individualistic as well as the social aspirations of the Spanish citizens as citizens.

The moderate elements in Spanish life, both those of the Left and of the Right wing, all the parties of the Right and a very great percentage of the industrial and agricultural classes found that their essential liberties were being violated, that their public and parliamentary protests against governmental encroachments of liberty and life were being disregarded. Their discontent with the Government on the social and economic basis was such that they would welcome the leadership of anyone who would relieve them of the slavery that was being forced upon them. Those in Spain who are giving their support to and fighting on the side of the Nationalists are citizens who are attempting to

release themselves from a regime which would corrupt the national soul and would deprive them as citizens of the blessings of true liberty and democracy guaranteed to them by the Spanish Republic.

When in 1931 the Monarchy was peacefully abolished and the Republic was gloriously established the Hierarchy, the clergy, and the Catholic citizens of Spain not only accepted it but loyally threw into it all of their ability and enthusiasm. Almost immediately upon the establishment of the Republic, however, the Communist and radical elements introduced a spirit of disharmony with the Spanish character. The Communist and radical elements had for years been propagandizing in Spain and preparing for the day of revolution. They seized upon the first Cortes and immediately built up their political power. However, Catholics both as Spanish citizens and as Spanish Catholics cooperated with the successive governments and strove to further a progressive and liberal program for the good of the Spanish people. Between 1931 and February, 1936, there is not a single instance of Catholics as Catholics taking any action that was in violation of civil or religious liberty. During those same years there are countless instances of the Communist, Syndicalist, and Anarchist elements using suppressive and reprehensive measures against their fellow-citizens and inciting them to rebellion, as in the revolt of the Asturians in 1934.

During the period of 1931-32, the very time during which the new Spanish Constitution was drawn up and promulgated, the XII Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International was held in Moscow. The theses adopted included the statement that "the prerequisites for a revolutionary crisis are being created at a rapid pace in Spain." The record for Spain during the succeeding years fully justified this claim.

As 1931 saw a critical turn in Spanish history, so February, 1936, was a critical month in the history of the Spanish Republic. It has been stated time and time again that the popular majority in the February elections went to the Rightist front but that the electoral laws, through previous manipulation on the part of the Leftist majority in the Cortes, threw the majority representation to Leftist deputies. The majority was of the slightest, but it gave the Leftist

deputies the legal power further to manipulate the results through secondary elections. A larger majority for the Left in the Cortes was, therefore, secured. The Catholic citizens of Spain and the parties of the Right accepted the result of the election, though with protest, and attempted continued cooperation with the Government in power.

This Government, however, feeling its strength began to take active measures whereby the opposing parties would be so weakened politically that they would be unable ever again to form into a concerted opposition. It either instigated or connived at the suppression of religious liberty and the destruction of religious edifices, at the suppression of freedom of speech and public opinion in and out of Parliament, at the suppression of freedom of the press through the destruction of newspapers and periodicals. More than that, as authoritative documents show, it was preparing for a military coup for the seizure of absolute power in the late spring or early summer of 1936. The decision of the Government, strongly Communistic, was the usurpation of governmental agencies supported by lawless military agencies for the perpetuation of a radical Leftist regime.

Calvo Sotelo, the parliamentarian who warned Spain that after a victory in the February elections for the United Front "there would wave over Spain the Red flag, the symbol of the destruction of Spain's past, her ideals and her honor," was murdered on July 13, 1936. The patriots of Spain, after their proposals to the permanent committee of the Parliament had been rejected, realized with finality that the crisis had come. All legitimate peaceful, parliamentary and electoral methods of changing the government or securing justice from the Government had failed. There was no alternative except recourse to arms.

Catholics are against war, and more especially against civil war. Catholics hate war, seek for its ultimate abolition, and insist that disputes shall be settled as far as is humanly possible by pacific means. But when war is brought to them, when war is the only recourse against an oppressive minority in power, when there is no alternative between war and the loss of all that men hold sacred in the way of liberty and life, then Catholics, as did the Catholics of Spain, must save themselves from destruction and annihilation. The citizens

of Spain, therefore, were justified by the right of self-defense in rising up against a malign power that was surely and inevitably destroying their country. Those who would deny them the exercise of this inalienable right would with equal logic have denied to the American people in 1776 the exercise of their inalienable right to rebel in arms against a government which suppressed their liberties.

The extreme—and inexplicable—reluctance of the various protesters to bear even a passing mention of Communistic activities cannot conceal the fact the governmental chaos was utilized to the utmost effect by a methodical and concerted activity emanating from the Soviet Government in Russia.

In the words of Paul Claudel, former Ambassador of France to the United States, a man world-known for his temperance and liberality of judgment: "All those forces of destruction"—governmental incapacity, Soviet anti-religion, and anarchistic destructiveness—"unchained themselves with a frightful violence." "It is impossible to understand," says Claudel, "the Spanish Revolution, which came to a complete head in 1936, unless one sees in it not an attempt at social construction, as in Russia, with the idea of substituting one order for the other, but an enterprise of destruction, long prepared and guided, particularly against the Church."

The significance of these attacks upon religion lies not alone in their incredible violence, but in the extreme thoroughness, the minuteness with which all the churches within the Communist regions were set on fire, all religious objects minutely destroyed, and practically all the priests and Religious massacred with unheard of refinements of cruelty. They bear the unmistakable evidence of being the work of a "conscious and fanatical minority," which with cold intelligence made use of the passions of the mob.

The attempt to represent the Communist activities in Spain as the sequel or consequence of the Insurgent movement is a perversion of facts which cannot stand up before the evidence of history. This activity had made its appearance repeatedly in the past, and preceded the civic-military uprising during four months of chaos prior to the February elections. Jesus Hernandez, Minister of Education to the Caballero Government, was able to report in June, 1936,

that "the United Front has been organized in a thousand different forms and the driving force behind the whole movement is the Communist party . . . working illegally."

The civic-military movement, say the Bishops, and the Communist revolution "are two facts which cannot be separated if one wishes to form a fair judgment on the nature of the war." Moreover—a point completely overlooked by their critics—"the movement did not take place without those who initiated it previously urging the public authorities to oppose by legal means the imminent Marxian revolution. The attempt was unsuccessful. Russia has grafted herself onto the Government's army."

The Bishops sum up the situation in a word that is confirmed by documented evidence and the testimony of unprejudiced observers: "A shrewd organization put at the service of a terrible purpose of annihilation, concentrated against the things of God, with the modern means of movement and destruction within the reach of every criminal hand."

Completely misleading is the presentation of the anti-religious and anarchistic uprisings as the natural consequence of deep popular resentment created by social abuses. That such social abuses existed, that they were a contributory factor in the terrible situation in Spain, no reasonable person will deny. But it is a striking fact that the fiercest outbursts of violence and destruction took place not in those parts of Spain where want and social exploitation were most prevalent, but in Spain's most prosperous regions, where social works were active and the upward path toward industrial and agrarian reform had already been vigorously set on foot.

Such resentment as existed offered the ready field for agitators, for skilful propagandists of discontent. But the organization of this discontent, its utilization for the purposes of a planned attack upon religion and civic liberty was the work not of popular instinct, but of an agitation planned from without.

THE LOYALIST GOVERNMENT

There is a fundamental assumption in the minds of the 150 signatories and probably in the minds of the majority of the American people who have been affected by propa-

ganda, that the Loyalist Government is now the legitimate Government in Spain. This is an assumption and purely an assumption, not a matter of fact. The Government now operating at Valencia is not the Government that was elected in February, 1936, and does not profess the same policies as that Government or stand upon the mandate that was given to it by the vote of less than one-half the citizens of Spain in February, 1936. The Government elected at that time represented itself as a moderate Left-Wing Government. The successive premiers who were designated by a harassed and menaced Cortes were progressively Leftist and finally became Communist under Premier Largo Caballero. Certainly not one of the 150 signatories, nor any honest man, can assert that the Spanish people would give a majority to a Communist regime.

Due to internal troubles between the Stalinite Communists, the Trotskyite Communists, and the Syndicalists and the Anarchists there has been a conflict between the Leftist parties, and this conflict has not been settled by parliamentary methods but by use of force and repression. The present incumbent, Premier Negrin, has secured his power by the forcible ousting without parliamentary recourse of Largo Caballero and the more radical elements.

The Government now headed by Negrin cannot in any way be said to represent the will of the Spanish people. The Negrin Government cannot claim that it has the support of two-thirds of the Spanish people, or that it can exercise its jurisdiction over two-thirds of the Spanish land. The factual truth is that the Government elected in February, 1936, has ceased to exist. In its place have arisen two *de facto* governments battling for supremacy. More than that, by popular acceptance of leadership, one-third of Spain is held under the domination of Premier Negrin, and two-thirds of Spain has freely and enthusiastically acclaimed loyalty and allegiance to General Franco.

Two-thirds of the Spanish fighting force of their own volition are fighting under the standard of the Nationalists, and far less than one-third are willing to fight under the standard of Negrin. If an election were held tomorrow throughout all of Spain, an overwhelming popular vote would freely be given to General Franco, and a miserable minority would be accorded to Premier Negrin. The Span-

ish people have expressed themselves voluntarily and forcefully. They have repudiated in the only manner that is possible to them the Caballero and Negrin governments. Let foreigners, therefore, who hold to the principle of self-determination within nations cease to meddle in the internal and domestic affairs of a free and independent people.

FOREIGN INTERVENTION

From the critical days of late July, 1936, the foreign press has been filled with propagandistic misrepresentations emphasizing the help given to the Nationalist cause by the Moors, Italians, and Germans, and has been strangely silent about the help given to the Loyalist cause by the Russians, the French, the dissident Germans, Italians, Czechoslovakians, and even Americans. In the matter of foreign intervention there has been a suppression of truth and the most vehement dissemination of untruths.

In regard to the Moors, it should be clear to everyone by this time that the Moors are as much citizens of Spain as are the Negroes citizens of the United States; that the Moors are as legitimately a part of the Spanish army as the well-respected Negro regiments are of the American army. No one will deny that German mechanics and strategists, and that Italian warriors are fighting for General Franco. But that is half of the story. The 150 signatories if they were honest would also affirm that Frenchmen from the very beginning have been supplying aviators, strategists and warriors to the Loyalists, that Russians have been directing the military maneuvers of the Loyalist army, have been piloting the planes that have brought destruction on Nationalist territory, and have been supplying money and munitions of all sorts for the Loyalist armies. In addition, Americans in great numbers have been fighting as pilots and ground soldiers in two American brigades. The 15th Division of the Loyalist Army is composed of foreign interventionists.

Let all those foreign volunteers be withdrawn from Spain and let all foreign aid, governmental and unofficial, be cut off from Spain; segregate this war and let it remain a civil war between the citizens of Spain for their own self-determination and survival. If that were done the issues that are being fought out with bullets and bloodshed would

quickly clarify themselves. If that were done the last day of the war would arrive quickly. Spain with its contending forces would then be able to right itself and to express itself. It is foreign intervention that is prolonging the agony and the crucifixion of Spain.

THE QUESTION OF ATROCITIES

It is not surprising to find reference to Badajoz in the Open Letter of the 150 signatories. But it is surprising that men of integrity, who should know the facts, instance this discredited story. It is common knowledge that the story of Badajoz appeared in the Paris newspapers two days before the massacre at Badajoz was alleged to have taken place. Yet always, when speaking of atrocities, the hostile critics of the Nationalists fling forth the magic word "Badajoz."

Granted that there were executions in Badajoz, do they justify or do they lessen the guilt of the Loyalist Government in executing at least 14,000 priests and Religious in the territory of Spain held by them? Do they justify the murder or the execution of every prominent Rightist Catholic and non-Catholic in the cities and towns held by the Loyalists, since the opening of the war and before that? Do they justify the fully coordinated and authenticated murder of the families, including women and children, by way of reprisals of Nationalist sympathizers?

Our position is not that of condoning murder or of exculpating the Nationalist authorities in atrocities whatever they may be, or in mass executions, or in any other violation of natural and divine law. Murder is always murder no matter who commits it. Cruelty is always cruelty no matter by whom perpetrated. But in this Spanish Civil War, as in all wars, the record of both sides must in honesty be drawn up. That record is lengthier and more inhuman on the side of the Loyalists than it is on the side of the Nationalists. The 150 signatories of the Open Letter would close their lips on the subject of the dehumanized atrocities of the Loyalists and insincerely cry out in condemnation of the alleged atrocities of the Nationalists.

As has been clearly pointed out in the statement by prominent British Protestants, published in the *New York Times* for October 7, the assertion that Protestant churches

have been suppressed in the Nationalist territory is false. Not only have explicit guarantees been given as to the freedom of Protestant worship, but the Protestant church and schools in Salamanca have recently been restored to Protestants since Franco gained power in that city.

THE SPANISH BISHOPS

In the Open Letter of the 150 signatories there is a grave misrepresentation of the position held by the Spanish bishops, and in their expression of this position in the joint pastoral which aroused the ire of the Protestant clergymen and laymen. It may be stated categorically that the Spanish bishops in 1931 accepted the establishment of the Spanish Republic as an expression of the will of the Spanish people. The Spanish bishops accepted and gave allegiance to the Constitution drawn up by the first Cortes though reserving their right as Spanish citizens to question certain sections of this document. The Spanish bishops have accepted and favored the democratic and republican institutions in Spain. They have cooperated in the political, social, economic progress under the parliamentary form of government in Spain. They have not had any other activities nor mingled in political issues nor become pawns of a political party. They have nobly championed the fundamental rights of man and the rights of all classes within the democracy, aristocratic, bourgeois and proletarian. They have shown themselves to be deeply concerned with the eradication of social, and economic abuses and evils. They have been eager for the establishment of a regime of social justice, for popular education, for peace. The Spanish bishops have discovered, as have the citizens of Spain discovered that they have been deceived and coerced by a minority group which seized the Government of republican Spain. After the election of 1936 the Spanish bishops clearly discerned, as did the citizens of Spain, that democracy has disappeared from the Loyalist side and that democracy will never return through a victory of the Loyalist Army. Spain, should General Franco and the Nationalists be defeated, will be turned into a Soviet Russia or will descend into a governmental category lower than Soviet Russia, a state of anarchy and chaos.

CONCLUSION

That the Church in Spain is in any way committed to the governments, the ideology or the policies of Nazi or Fascist auxiliaries who have been helping the cause of Franco in Spain is a proposition entirely at variance not only with the Bishops' letter but with the facts as well. As was pointed out by Monsignor Ready in his letter of October 6 to the New York *Times*, the critics have completely twisted the obvious meaning of the Bishops' plain words in this regard when they write: "We would be the first to regret that the irresponsible autocracy of a parliament should be replaced by the yet more terrible one of a dictatorship, without roots in the nation."

Finally, we flatly deny as is asserted that this is a war between democracy and special privilege. The principles for which the Spanish bishops stand are the principles common to all humanity. They are the principles enunciated by George Washington and the founders of the American Republic and embodied in our democratic laws and institutions: the freedom to worship God in peace, freedom to educate one's children according to the dictates of one's conscience, freedom from the interference and tyranny of foreign states and alien agitators.

The Spanish bishops, as intelligent men, as true Christians, have called forth from the depths of their souls to intelligent and God-fearing men, whether these profess Catholicism or Protestantism or Judaism, for aid and understanding. They are men who have seen with their own eyes the hatred and class violence engendered by the closed fist, the materialism and atheism fostered under the symbol of the sickle and hammer. They are the men who seek a Spain that shall be the traditional Spain of courtesy and spirituality but also the new Spain with a progressive and equitable order of social and economic and political justice. They are the men who should be championed by the ministers of religion whether these be Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish. They are not the men who should be calumniated and attacked by Protestant clergymen.

The Spanish bishops have protested as men, as citizens, as Christians against a world propaganda that would aid

and abet the destroyers of their social, religious, and national life. Their cause is not the cause of Catholics alone, nor yet of Christians alone, but of all men who believe in social and international peace and the moral law. The least we can do is to afford them a respectful hearing, and not heap them with abuse.

The Rev. Brother Albert, President of St. Mary's College, California; Dean Leopold F. Arnaud, Columbia University, New York; O'Brien Atkinson, President New York Catholic Evidence Guild; James P. Aylward, Kansas City; Simon A. Baldus, Assistant Editor, *Extension Magazine*, Chicago; R. Baudier, Assistant Editor, *Catholic Action of the South*, New Orleans; Monsignor John L. Belford, Nativity Church, Brooklyn; the Rev. J. I. Bergin, Editor, *The Canadian Messenger*, Toronto; Harry Lorin Binsse, Editor, *Liturgical Arts*, New York; the Rev. W. Howard Bishop, Rector of St. Martin's, Ohio; the Rev. Hyacinth Blocker, O.F.M., Editor, *St. Anthony Messenger*, Cincinnati; Monsignor John J. Bonner, Superintendent of Schools, Philadelphia; Monsignor Boylan, President of Dowling College, Des Moines, Iowa; the Rev. L. M. Boyle, Editor, *The Catholic Messenger*, Davenport, Iowa; Dr. Goetz Briefs, Georgetown University, Washington; Frank Bruce, President of Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee; John Brunini, Editor, *Spirit*, New York; W. I. Butler, New York; James Byrne, Chancellor of the University of New York; the Rev. James A. Byrnes, Executive Secretary National Catholic Rural Life Conference, St. Paul, Minn.; Thomas H. Cannon, High Chief Ranger, Catholic Order of Foresters, Chicago; Martin H. Carmody, Supreme Knight, Knights of Columbus, New Haven, Conn.; James T. Carroll, Editor, *Catholic Columbian*, Columbus, Ohio; the Rev. Patrick J. Carroll, C.S.C., Editor, *The Ave Maria*, Notre Dame, Ind.; the Rev. Thomas F. Coakley, D.D., Rector of Sacred Heart Church, Pittsburgh; Daniel F. Cohalan, New York; John B. Collins, Editor, *The Pittsburgh Catholic*; Monsignor Joseph M. Corrigan, President of the Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C.; the Very Rev. Harry B. Crimmins, S.J., President of St. Louis University; the Rev. Edward Lodge Curran, Editor, *Light*, Brooklyn; John L. Darrouzet, Galveston, Tex.; John M. Dealy, National Commander, Catholic War Veterans, Long Island

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Clarifying Spanish Civil War Issues

FRANCIS TALBOT, S.J.

CONSISTENTLY since July 18, 1936, *America* has regarded the Spanish Civil War as a civil war, not as a holy war, nor as a religious war, nor as a Catholic crusade. We believed from the very beginning, and we still believe, that the Rightist civic, political and military leaders rose under the captainship of General Franco for the defense of their fundamental rights as human beings, and of their social, economic, civil, democratic and religious rights as citizens of the Spanish Republic.

These Rightist leaders represented the will of more than half the Spanish electorate, for, in the election held on February 16, 1936, the Rightist parties polled a total of 4,570,744 votes; the Centrist parties, allied to the Rightists, were given 340,073 votes; but the Leftist parties, which later formed the Popular Front Government, totaled a vote of only 4,356,559. More than half the voters of Spain in February, 1936, augmented by an undetermined but large number who turned against the Leftist regime between February and July, 1936, were the "rebels" who made the tragic decision on July 18, 1936, that they were no longer able to defend their inalienable rights against an encroaching Government except by the liquidation of that Government and its Moscow-control. The war in Spain, therefore, was and has always been a civil war between citizens of Leftist and Rightist political affiliations.

America, during fifteen months, has contended that the Spanish Civil War is purely and simply a Communist War. The projector of it during all the years of the Republic, and the instigator of it in 1936 was the firmly welded and finely pointed Communist spearhead of the Popular Front. This spearhead was pushed forward by Socialists, Syndicalists

and Anarchists. Not only did this Popular Front seek to suppress the liberties and the rights of all opposing parties and individuals, but made every endeavor to obliterate the power of any opposition ever again to loosen its hold on governmental and military agencies. The popular uprising under General Franco, therefore, was against the menace of a Moscow-Madrid domination of Spain.

The Catholic Church in Spain was the victim of every Leftist Government since 1931. Scarcely had the Republic been a year functioning before anti-religious laws were promulgated, the clergy killed or expelled, the churches and convents destroyed. With each increase of radical Leftist power in the Government, there was an equal increase in the persecution of Catholics and Catholicism. Yet the Catholic hierarchy and clergy, the spokesmen of the Catholic Church, exerted none but peaceful and lawful means of attempting to rectify the wrongs committed against their Church. They had abandoned hope for justice and religious liberty under any Leftist Government. They had no choice, therefore, but that of casting in their lot with the "rebels" of July, 1936.

This is the meaning, as we conceive it, of the Joint Letter of the Spanish Bishops recently released in the United States. The Spanish Bishops are merely expressing from the viewpoint of religion their considered opposition to a belligerent that "was aiming directly at the abolition of the Catholic religion in Spain." They are, therefore, but adding their voice to the cry of the Spanish citizenry for liberation from a government that had lost its right to rule the Spanish nation.

American liberals who care nothing about Spain and who seek no good for Spain have seized on the Joint Letter of the Spanish Bishops as a pretext for a renewed attack on Catholicism and American Catholics. These Christian liberals are always Catholic baiters. As we have stated before, they are fixed on only one issue, dependable only along one line of action, that of arousing religious strife in the United States. The writer of the *Open Letter* and the nucleus responsible for its publication are guilty of a hiss of hate against Catholicism. We cannot believe that all the signatories would agree with them, and we would welcome a personal repudiation. Through all the controversy that will unfortunately ensue, it must be remembered that the issue in Spain is not Catholicism but is Communism.

Spain's Social-Work Program

By N. C. W. C. News Service

A DECREE has been signed by General Francisco Franco making it a national duty for all women between the ages of seventeen and thirty-five to engage in social work for six months in order to overcome the unusual circumstances caused by the war and the work of reconstruction, it was announced at Nationalist headquarters here.

A sum of 1,200,000 pesetas has been collected in the city of Zaragoza through the observance of one-plate meal days, when all citizens eat the food which one plate contains and forego desert. Money that is not spent for food on these days is turned over to the Nationalist Treasury for social work. In Seville, 212 houses for workers have been constructed by the Nationalist regime. The Governor of the Province of Santander has announced that new fishing vessels will be supplied to fishermen, whose craft were taken from them by the retreating Reds. Canneries in Santona, in the Province of Santander, have reopened.

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